Spring 2014
T TH 1:00-2:20 BKH 116

LING/PSYC 315
**SEMANTICS**

**INSTRUCTOR**

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Office hours: T TH: 2:30-3:50

**COURSE DESCRIPTION**

This course introduces students to the systematic evaluation of linguistic meaning. A basic overview of the different theoretical approaches to semantic investigation will be provided, but the emphasis will be placed on the so-called "Cognitive" approaches. The 7 sections each examine a specific aspect of meaning. The first one introduces the field. The second one is concerned with the organization of the lexicon, as well as with the syntagmatic and paradigmatic relations which compose it. The third section is devoted to "objectivist" semantics, or in other words the description of the world in terms of reference, truth, and logic. The fourth section is concerned with the description of meaning and introduces notions such as semantic decomposition, feature analysis, compositionality, as well as alternative views such as semantic primitives. The fifth section explores the connection between meaning and concepts and is devoted to issues of categorization and category structure, cognitive models, frames, and blends. The sixth section considers lexical semantics, with particular emphasis on the meaning of everyday terms (colors, kinship and artifacts).

## Section 1: Introduction. Semantics: The systematic study of meaning

This section constitutes a preliminary investigation of the different kinds of positions theorists have proposed of linguistic meaning. Issues of reference, extension, denotation, are considered, as well as the relation between concepts and words. The cognitive linguistics theory of meaning is introduced and discussed.

**Readings**.

1. Ullman, Stephen. 1962. Chapter 3 of *Semantics: An introduction to the science of meaning*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.
2. Löbner, Sebastian. 2002. Chapter 1 and 2 of *Understanding Semantics*. London: Arnold.
3. Saeed, John. 2009. Chapter 2 of *Semantics*. Wiley-Blackwell.
4. Croft, William and Alan Cruse. 2004. Chapter 1 of *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: University Press.

5. Taylor, John. 2002. Chapters 1-3 of *Cognitive Grammar*. Oxford University Press.

## Section 2: An organized lexicon

This section is concerned with the definition of a word, and with the characterization of the lexicon as an organized system. The different relations that hold between the different lexical items (synonymy, homonymy, antonymy, etc.) are systematically investigated. The notions of "semantic fields" and "frames" are also presented. As a first attempt to characterize the systematic relations that obtain throughout specific frames, the fundamentals of the componential analysis will be presented and critiqued.

**Readings**:

1. Bolinger, Dwight. 1981 [1968]. Chapter 6 of *Aspects of language* 3rd edition. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich.
2. Cruse, Alan. 2011. Chapters 4 of *Meaning in Language*. Oxford University Press.
3. Saeed, John. 2009. Chapter 3 of *Semantics*. Wiley-Blackwell.
4. Lehrer, Adrienne. 1974. Chapters 2 and 3 of *Semantic Fields and Lexical Structure*. Amsterdam & London: North Holland Publishing. New York: American Elsevier Publishing Co.
5. Murphy, Lynne. 2003. Chapter 1 of *Semantic Relations and the Lexicon*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
6. Cruse, Alan. 2011. Chapters 10 of *Meaning in Language*. Oxford University Press.
7. Clark, Eve. 1993. Chapter 1 of *The Lexicon in Acquisition*. Cambridge University Press.

## Section 3: Elements of meaning

This section presents the different proposals concerning the lexical decomposition of words. Particular emphasis is placed on feature attribute models, but also on Wiezbicka's Semantic Metalanguage, notions of Cognitive Models and frames.

**Readings:**

1. Cruse, Alan. 2011. *Chapter 11 of Meaning in Language.* Oxford University Press.
2. Wierzbicka, Anna. 1996. "Semantic primes and semantic fields." Chapter 5 of *Semantics Primes and Universals*. Oxford University Press
3. Goddard, Clifford (ed) 2008. "Natural semantic metalanguage: The state of the art." Chapter 1 in *Cross-Linguistics Semantics*. John Benjamins.
4. Fillmore, Charles. 1982. "Frame Semantics". In Linguistic Society of Korea (ed.)*, Linguistics in the Morning Calm*, 111-138. Seoul: Hanshin.

5. Croft, William and Alan Cruse. 2004. Chapter 2 of *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: University Press.

6. Saeed, John. 2009. Chapter 9 of *Semantics.* Wiley-Blackwell (Optional).

## Section 4: Meaning and concepts

This section is concerned with the categorizing function of language. The componential analysis introduced in the preceding section illustrates a specific view of categories usually referred to as the "classical model". This section presents the limits of that model and introduces research from psychology that validates a different view according to which categories are organized around prototypical members. The linguistic consequences of this prototype model are considered, and specific examples of "radial categories" are introduced.

**Readings**:

1. Rosch, Eleanor. 1978. Principles of categorization. In *Cognition and categorization,* ed. by E. Rosch and B. Lloyd. Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, pp. 27-48.

2. Taylor, John. 2003 [1989]. Chapters 2 and 3 of *Linguistic Categorization*. Oxford University Press.

3. Croft, William and Alan Cruse. 2004. Chapter 4 of *Cognitive Linguistics*. Cambridge: University Press.

4. Lakoff, George. 1987. Chapter 6 of *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories reveal about the Mind*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

5. Andrea Tyler, and Vyvyan Evans. 2001. “Reconsidering prepositional polysemy networks: The case of *over*”. *Language* 77

## Section 5: Colors and natural kinds: The semantics of everyday terms.

Where does the meaning of some terms everyone uses every day come from? This section considers the meaning of color terms, as well as artefacts and natural categories.

**Readings**:

1. Haiman, John. 1980. "Dictionaries and encyclopedias". *Lingua* 50, 329-357.

2. Wierzbicka, Anna. 1996. "Prototypes and Invariants." Chapter 4 of *Semantics Primes and Universals*. Oxford University Press

2. Wierzbicka, Anna. 1996. "The Semantics of Natural Kinds." Chapter 11 of *Semantics Primes and Universals*. Oxford University Press

3. Wierzbicka, Anna. 1984. "Cups and mugs: Lexicography and conceptual analysis". *Australian Journal of Linguistics* 4, 205-255.

4. Wierzbicka, Anna. 1996. "The Meaning of Color Terms and the Universals of Seeing." Chapter 10 of *Semantics Primes and Universals*. Oxford University Press

5. Taylor, John. 2003 [1989]. "The Categorization of Colour". Chapter 1 of *Linguistic Categorization*. Oxford University Press.

6. Wierzbicka, Anna. 1985 "Oats and Wheat: The Fallacy of Arbitrariness". In John Haiman (ed.), *Iconicity in Syntax*, 311-342. Amsterdam and Philadelphia: John Benjamins.

## Section 6: Describing the outside world

This section is concerned with the description of the world as an outside entity. The emphasis is placed on issues of the reference of an entity (the entity in the world a linguistic expression describes), as well as on the description of the truth condition of a sentence and more generally the relation between meaning and propositional logic.

**Readings:**

1. Cruse, Alan. 2011. Chapter 2 of *Meaning in Language*. Oxford University Press.

2. Saeed, John. 2009. Chapter 4 of *Semantics*. Wiley-Blackwell.

## Section 7: Semantic change.

This section considers the semantic shift from lexical to grammatical meaning.

**Readings:**

1. Traugott, Elizabeth, and Richard Dasher. 2002. "The development of modal verbs." Chapter 3 of *Regularity in Semantic Change*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2. Talmy, Leonard. 2003. "Lexicalization patterns." Chapter 1 in *Toward a Cognitive Semantics* (Vol. 2). Cambridge: MIT Press.

**OVERVIEW OF ASSIGNMENTS**

Homework 1. Due February 4.
MIDTERM. In class: February 18.
Homework 2. Due February 27.

Homework 3. Due April 8.
Homework 4. Provide a complete outline of your final paper.
Final paper: Due on the last day of finals.

**ADA STATEMENT:**

Any student with a disability requiring accommodations in the course is encouraged to contact me after class or during office hours. Additionally, students should contact Disability Support Services in the Ley Student Center.

**EVALUATION:**

**The students in LING/PSYC 315 will be evaluated according to the following criteria**:

1. Four homework assignments due at the times indicated on the syllabus (35%)
2. Two in-class midterm exams (35%)
3. One sort final paper (5-8 pages) that elaborates on one of the topics of the course (20%)
4. Attendance and participation to weekly discussions of assigned readings (10%)

**Important note**: All assignments in this course are subject to the terms and conditions of Rice's Honors Code.

**COURSE SCHEDULE**

| WEEK | TOPIC COVERED IN CLASS and HOMEWORK DUE | READINGS |
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| **1**: January 14-16 | **Introduction. Semantics: The systematic study of meaning**<br>Describing the outside world<br>Signs and symbols<br>Different theories of meaning | -Ullman, Stephen. 1962. Chapter 3 of *Semantics: An introduction to the science of meaning*.<br>-Löbner, Sebastian. Chapter 1 of *Understanding Semantics*<br>- Löbner, Sebastian. Chapter 2 of *Understanding Semantics*<br>-Saeed, John. 2009. Chapter 2 of *Semantics* |
| **2**: January 21-23 | **Introduction. Cognitive semantics**<br>Meaning is conceptualization | Croft, William and Alan Cruse. 2004. Chapter 1 of *Cognitive Linguistics*.<br>-Taylor, John. 2002. Chapter 1of *Cognitive Grammar*.<br>-Taylor, John. 2002. Chapter 2 of *Cognitive Grammar*.<br>-Taylor, John. 2002. Chapter 3 of |

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| | | *Cognitive Grammar* |
| **3**: January 28-30 | **A structured lexicon**.<br>General properties of the lexicon<br>Semantic fields, semantic relations.<br><br>HOMEWORK 1 ASSIGNED ON JANUARY 30 | -Bolinger, Dwight. 1981 [1968]. Chapter 6 of *Aspects of language*<br>-Lehrer, Adrienne. 1974. Chapter 1 of *Semantic Fields and Lexical Structure*.<br>-Lehrer, Adrienne. 1974. Chapter 2 of *Semantic Fields and Lexical Structure*.<br>Saeed, John. 2009. Chapter 3 of *Semantics*.<br>Cruse, Alan. 2011 Chapter 4 of *Meaning in Language.* |
| **4**: February 4-6 | **A structured lexicon**<br>What organization is behind this structure? Different approaches to lexical investigation: Componential analyses.<br>HOMEWORK 1 DUE ON FEBRUARY 4 | -Murphy, Lynne. 2003. Chapter 1 of *Semantic Relations and the Lexicon*.<br>-Lehrer, Adrienne. 1974. Chapter 3 of *Semantic Fields and Lexical Structure*.<br>-Cruse, Alan. 2011. Chapter 10 of *Meaning in Language*.<br>-Clark, Eve. 1993. Chapter 1 of *The Lexicon in Acquisition*. |
| **5**: February 11-13 | **Elements of Meaning**<br>Componential analyses, Natural Semantic Metalanguage | -Cruse, Alan. 2011. *Chapter 11 of Meaning in Language.*<br>-Goddard, Clifford. 2008. Chapter 1 of *Cross-Linguistic Semantics*.<br>-Wierzbicka, Anna. 1996. Semantic primitives and semantic fields. Chapter 5 of *Primes and Universals*.- |
| **6**: February 18-20 | **Elements of meaning**<br>Frames, Idealized Cognitive Models, Mental spaces.<br><br>MIDTERM 1 IN CLASS on February 18<br>HOMEWORK 2 ASSIGNED ON FEBRUARY 20 | -Fillmore, Charles. 1982. *Frame Semantics.*<br>-Croft, William and Alan Cruse. 2004. Chapter 2 of *Cognitive Linguistics*.<br>-Saeed, John. 2009. Chapter 9 of *Semantics* (Optional) |
| **7**: February 25-27 | **Elements of meaning** (continued)<br>**Meaning and concepts**<br>Features and prototypes<br><br>HOMEWORK 2 DUE ON FEBRUARY 27 | -Rosch, Eleanor. 1978. Principles of categorization.<br>-Taylor, John. 2003. Chapter 2 of *Linguistic Categorization*.<br>-Taylor, John. 2003. Chapter 3 of *Linguistic Categorization* |
| **March 1-9** | **Spring break** | |

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| **8**: March 11-13 | **Meanings and concepts** (continued)<br>Radial categories | -Croft, William and Alan Cruse. 2004. Chapter 4 of *Cognitive Linguistics*.<br>-Lakoff, George. 1987. Chapter 6 of *Women, Fire, and Dangerous Things: What Categories reveal about the Mind*.<br>-Andrea Tyler, and Vyvyan Evans. 2001. "Reconsidering prepositional polysemy networks: The case of *over*". *Language* 77. |
| **9**: March 18-20 | **Meanings and concepts** (continued)<br>Problems with the notion of prototype<br>**The semantics of everyday terms**<br>Dictionaries and encyclopedias | -Wierzbicka, Anna. 1996. "Prototypes and Invariants." Chapter 4 of *Semantics Primes and Universals*.<br>-Haiman, John. 1980. "Dictionaries and encyclopedias". *Lingua* 50, 329-357. |
| **10**: March 25-27 | **The semantics of everyday terms** (continued)<br><br>MIDTERM 2 IN CLASS ON MARCH 25 | -Wierzbicka, Anna. 1996. "The Semantics of Natural Kinds." Chapter 11 of *Semantics Primes and Universals*.<br>-Wierzbicka, Anna. 1984. "Cups and mugs: Lexicography and conceptual analysis". *Australian Journal of Linguistics*<br>Wierzbicka, Anna. 1985 "Oats and Wheat: The Fallacy of Arbitrariness". |
| **11**: April 1-3 (No class on April 3) | **The semantics of color terms**<br><br>HOMEWORK 3 ASSIGNED ON APRIL 1 | -Taylor, John. 2003. "The Categorization of Colour". Chapter 1 of *Linguistic Categorization*.<br>-Wierzbicka, Anna. 1996. "The Meaning of Color Terms and the Universals of Seeing." Chapter 10 of *Semantics Primes and Universals*. |
| **12**: April 8-10 | **Describing the objective world: Reference, truth conditions, entailment.**<br><br>HOMEWORK 3 DUE ON APRIL 8 | Cruse, Alan. 2011. Chapter 2 of *Meaning in Language*. |
| **13**: April 15-17 | **Describing the objective world: Presupposition.**<br>**Semantic change** | -Saeed, John. 2009. Chapter 4 of *Semantics*. |

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| **14:** April 22-24 | **Semantic change** (continued)<br>**Lexicalization patterns**<br><br>HOMEWORK 4: Outline of the paper DUE on April 22 | -Traugott, Elizabeth, and Richard Dasher. 2002. "The development of modal verbs." Chapter 3 of *Regularity in Semantic Change*.<br>-Talmy, Leonard. 2003. "Lexicalization patterns." Chapter 1 in *Toward a Cognitive Semantics*. |